

"The Baptists and the American Bible Society."

Mr. Editor: I had fully intended to say nothing further on the issue between the Baptists and the American Bible Society, but several judicious friends have intimated that they thought it was my duty in justice to the Society to at least, make a more statement of the facts presented in explicit my address. I am naturally averse to controversy, and newspaper notoriety, and would gladly escape this duty, but as the interests of truth appear to demand it, and as Mr. Garrett's persistency in bringing the matter before the public may tend to prejudice the cause of the Bible Society in the community, I have determined, after mature deliberation, to ask the use of your columns, for a more elaborate statement of the well-authenticated facts in the case.

In his first article, Mr. Garrett says: "The Baptists were among the first and most liberal supporters of the American Bible Society, if not the real founders." (Italics his.) The facts of history do not support this zealous boast. The first suggestion for the formation of the society came from the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, a Presbyterian Home Missionary, in 1815. The first one to take active measures in favor of such an organization was the Hon. Elias Boudinot, President of the New Jersey Bible Society, a member of the Presbyterian Church, and one of the trustees of Princeton College, who issued the first public communication on the subject, January 1, 1816, and a call for the convention January 17, 1816. The New York Bible Society was the first to respond, and not the Philadelphia Society organized by Dr. Staughton, a Baptist. The President of the convention was Joshua M. Wallace, Esq., delegate of the New Jersey Bible Society, and the Secretaries were the Revs. J. B. Homeyn, D. D., and Lyman Beecher, D. D., two eminent Presbyterian ministers. The first President of the society was Mr. Boudinot, a Presbyterian, and the first address to the people was drawn up by the Rev. John M. Mason, then an Associate Reformed, but afterwards a Presbyterian minister, who also became the society's first secretary for foreign correspondence. (See Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, vol. I, p. 263, vol. II, pp. 1,425 and 1,517; also Manual of the American Bible Society, pp. 9 and 10). These are simply the facts of history which any one who will devote an hour's time to the subject can verify for himself. Seven denominations, (Congregational, Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal, Reformed Dutch, Baptist, and the Society of Friends), united, on equal terms, in the formation of the American Bible Society, and history offers absolutely no support to the implication of Mr. Garrett's remark that the Baptists were "the real founders." It was indeed several years after the organization that the Rev. S. H. Cone, D. D., a Baptist, was made one of the secretaries, and he appears, as the sequel will show, to have been largely responsible for the society's troubles, was the leader of the secession movement, and was made the first President of the Baptist "American and Foreign Bible Society."

In my address the following statement was made: "In 1835 it was learned that Dr. Judson and those associated with him had published at the expense of the society a translation of the New Testament into Burmese, and instead of translating the word *baptizo*, according to custom, had translated it by a word meaning to immerse." Mr. Garrett infers from this language, what was not charged, that those missionaries either knowingly "violated the rules of the society," or else "obtained money under false pretences," and, as one bright gentleman in town remarked, by the array of syllogisms in his second article he almost proved it against them. The above statement I propose now to prove to be literally true, and leave Mr. Garrett to take care of the inferences. The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, the newest and best authority on religious subjects, in its admirable account of the American Bible Society says: "The first of these troubles arose in 1835, when it was learned that Dr. Judson and his coadjutors had published, at the expense of the society, in their Burmese translation of the New Testament, a translation instead of a translation of the Greek words *baptizō*, *baptizo*, rendering them by *immersion* and to *immerse*." (vol. I, p. 263). The American Encyclopedia also says: "The American and Foreign Bible Society, originated in a secession of the Baptists from the American Bible Society, after the latter society refused to aid the Bengalee and Burmese versions made by the Baptist missionaries, because in these versions the Greek word *baptizo* and its cognates were translated *immerse*, *immersion*, &c." (vol. II, p. 616). These statements are concise, clear and indisputable, but for the satisfaction of the reader, I will quote from the historical account of this matter put forth by the Managers of the American Bible Society on the 4th of February, 1841. After a statement of the origin, aims, and recognized principles of the society, the Managers, who, remember, consisted of thirty-six honorable, intelligent Christian men, all laymen, representing seven denominations, proceed to say: "In July, 1835, a letter was received, through a friend in Philadelphia, from the Rev. William H. Pearce, an English Baptist missionary at Bengal, in India. In this letter information was given that the writer, together with the Rev. Mr. Yates, a brother missionary, had prepared a new version of the Bengalee scriptures, which they were desirous of having published. With Christian frankness it was stated that in this version they had translated the Greek terms *baptizo* and *baptism* by words which signify *immerse* and *immersion*, and that the Bible Society at Calcutta had, on this account, refused to patronize it. Had this letter contained nothing further, the Board could easily have dismissed the whole matter, as they had no responsibilities connected with that version. But it was further stated that this new Bengalee translation was made on the same

principles as those which obtained in the Burmese translation, which it was understood, the American Bible Society patronized. Here was a new and startling announcement. The Board had indeed granted, at different times, many thousand of dollars towards the publication of this Burmese version, but without information from any quarter, or the least suspicion that it was of the character described by Mr. Pearce. They knew the Rev. Dr. Judson, the translator, to be a learned and pious man, and therefore felt a confidence that he had made what they considered a faithful version, i. e. one which conveyed the inspired meaning—the only point to which they thought of directing attention—presuming every friend of the Bible Society to be aware that its Board could not appropriate moneys for any new version of a marked denominational character. On inquiring of the Rev. S. H. Cone, (one of the Standing Committee on Distribution), who had repeatedly solicited funds for the Burmese version, whether that version was prepared as described by Mr. Pearce, he for the first time informed them that such was the fact." (Bible Translations, pp. 4 and 5, published by Board of Managers of A. B. S.) Mr. Garrett asserts in his first article that "the Society made a grant of \$1,200 to aid Mr. Judson in his translation of the Burmese New Testament with a full knowledge of the fact that he had translated (italics his) 'baptizo' by a word meaning to 'immerse.'" He re-asserts this in the second article with the remark, "Mr. Cecil took no notice of this assertion, and yet I am fully prepared to prove it." The reader, in view of the strong statement made by the Board of Managers which I have quoted above, will understand why I did not think it necessary to challenge Mr. Garrett's boastful assertion. But as he has chosen to repeat it, he is now at liberty to occupy the leisure hours of the holidays in proving it in the face of the contrary assertion of thirty-six of as good, as true, and as honorable Christian men as this country could produce.

The Board of Managers referred the matter to a special committee of seven—a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Baptist, a Methodist, a Moravian, one of the reformed Dutch churches, and one from the Society of Friends. After long consideration, they brought in a report with certain resolutions. Rev. S. H. Cone, one of their number, also presented a minority report. Mr. Garrett says to this minority report "no attention was paid." Indeed! Let us see. This was in August. The matter was postponed for further consideration. The resolutions were published in the newspapers. Several letters were received from Baptist clergymen, "suggesting some changes and additions in relation to the pending resolutions;" "these letters were laid before the board and the proposed changes were made;" and finally in February, 1836, after six months of careful deliberation, the preamble and resolutions, declining to aid in publishing bibles which could not be conscientiously used by all the denominations supporting the society, were passed. [Bible Translations, p. 5, 6] These "resolutions," the board says, "had been prepared, or modified, and approved of by some of the most intelligent and worthy Baptist clergymen in America."

It seems to me that nothing is clearer than that the American Bible Society could not publish, or help to publish, a denominational bible, and had Dr. Cone informed the Board of Managers from the first of the character of the Burmese translation, they would never have published that version. After the passage of the resolutions mentioned, the Baptists withdrew from the society, and organized the American and Foreign Bible Society, of which Dr. Cone became the first President.

But why did the society object to *baptizo* being translated? Simply because it is a broad, generic term which describes a ceremonial washing without prescribing the manner in which it shall be done, or the quantity of water used. While every Greek scholar knows that the word means *immerse*, he knows, also, that it means a great many other things besides, and that it is often employed in classic and sacred literature when the immersion of the body in water would have been impossible. *Baptizo* is a generic word like the word "go," which does not specify how one shall go, whether by walking or riding, or flying or swimming. *Immerse* is a specific word like "walk," which prescribes the mode or manner by which one goes. The late Dr. Dale, of Philadelphia, the author of the most voluminous and learned work on Baptism extant, has collated the word *baptizo* and its cognates in the whole range of ancient Greek literature from the remotest times down through the history of the early church, and I remember to have heard Dr. Chas. Hodge, one of the oldest and most widely known theologians this country has ever produced, say that if anything could be proven by cumulative evidence, Dr. Dale had proved that *baptizo* was used by the Greek speaking people as a generic term to describe the application of water in various ways. It was therefore unreasonable in the Baptists to suppose that the other denominations represented in the American Bible Society could consent for the society to publish, in the interests of a single denomination bible, which a vast majority of modern Christendom could not conscientiously use. Have other societies supported by different churches, such as the Sunday School Union and the Tract Society, ever been asked to publish denominational books? I do not believe that such a thing has ever been thought of.

This matter has been brought before the Board of Managers again in recent years. I quote from the Sixty-sixth Report of the A. B. S., p. 33: "In October, 1880, an application was received from the executive committee of the American Baptist Missionary Union for a grant of \$2,000 for printing and circulating the Burman and Karen versions of the Scriptures in Burmah. In connection with this request assurance was given that these versions were freely used, not only by missionaries of the Church of England, but also, to a limited extent, by Roman Catholics, and that as no one was known to raise any objection to them in respect to points of faith and order, they were fairly entitled to be regarded as the 'received versions' of the land. The Committee on Versions, appreciating the force of this appeal and the testimony upon which it was based, sought for a confir-

mation of the statement by direct inquiry of the English missionaries, to whom they had been referred. Accordingly, under their instructions, a letter was addressed to the Bishop of Rangoon, as a trustworthy representative of the only mission from other Protestant lands, asking in what estimation these versions are held by the missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and whether they can be read and circulated without inconsistency by Christian missionaries of all branches of the Church of Christ. To this inquiry Bishop Titcomb made a very courteous response, in which while commending in the highest terms the general excellence of the Burmese version, he candidly stated that both that and the Karen Bible, in their persistent renderings of certain words, were at issue with the catholicity to which the Bible Society is pledged, and that the missionaries of his church in the public reading of the scriptures, were obliged on conscientious grounds to alter those words, as limiting an ordinance of Christ to a special form which they disclaimed as obligatory or essential. Failing thus to secure the desired testimony which they had been encouraged to expect, the Committee on Versions were shut up to the conclusion that the Burmese and Karen versions are deficient in the quality of catholicity, as that term is used in their regulations and in the By-laws of the American Bible Society."

As Mr. Garrett has intimated that I am "rather reckless in the use of language," a charge which I am sure no one who knows me well would have made, I have chosen to make these long quotations from the authorities themselves, whose terse and vigorous language he can now assail to his heart's content.

Mr. Garrett says: "Up to this time, (i. e. the time of the Baptist secession, 1836) the Baptists had given at least \$170,000 to the Society, and had received for their missionary versions less than \$50,000." And again, "As a matter of fact the Baptists are giving every year to this society thousands of dollars, and since 1835 not one dollar has come from it to aid them in their work among the heathens, or elsewhere." These over-confident statements can not be substantiated by history. The Board of Managers say: "The aggregate of legacies received from Baptists, so far as known to the Board, is no more than \$15,000." And how were these legacies expended? They were received "in the years 1830 and 1831, (several years before the division), the very years when the Managers were endeavoring to supply the entire United States with the Bible, and which funds were wholly expended in that enterprise. Yes, they were all used in preparing and circulating English, German and French Bibles for the good of our own common country; and a large debt remained after they were expended. No portion went to aid the missions of other denominations in preparing the Scriptures in any form. It can not be asked then, of course, that these funds should be paid back to the complainants." It also appears from the Society's books that between the years 1831-1839 "that more than \$30,000, in money and books, have been furnished by the Board to aid Baptist missionaries in circulating the Scriptures, while little more than half that sum has been received from Baptist legacies; and these were received under such circumstances as to pay no part of the large grants." (Bible Translations, p. 10 and 11). It also appears that out of a list of four hundred Life Directors, each of whom pays \$150 into the treasury, only thirteen were of the Baptist denomination; and out of a list of four hundred Life Members, each of whom has contributed thirty dollars, not more than 150 were Baptists. In a list of the names of 120 citizens of New York who aided in the erection of the Society's House, the name of only one Baptist, Dr. Luke Barker, who contributed thirty dollars, could be found. In addition to this some special donations were made by Baptists, amounting to less than \$1,000, to aid in their work in Burmah. Summing it all up, the Board of Managers say: "While it cannot be determined with minute accuracy what amount of money has been furnished by Baptists gratuitously, or so that it can be used by other denominations, the Board have no belief that it can surpass \$30,000 which they as a sect have received from the institution. Aside from the \$18,000 of legacies, (used at home and not to be counted), there is no evidence of their having contributed to the treasury one half the amount which they have received from it." (Bible Translations, p. 13 and 14). How inaccurate the statement is that "the Baptists are giving every year to this Society thousands of dollars," and receiving nothing in return may be seen from the Annual Reports of the Treasury. Take for instance the Annual Reports for 1882. In the column of "Receipts," the Baptists are not credited with a single dollar, but in the column of "Payments," I read this item: "To American Baptist Missionary Union for missions in Sweden \$2,231.67." But it may be said that the Baptists contribute by church collections, and hence do not receive credit for their gifts. It is admitted that, in rare instances, some Baptists, who are of a more liberal turn of mind than the body of the denomination do co-operate with the Bible Society, and take collections for its support. It,

however, appears from the above-mentioned report that while the total receipts for the year 1882 amounted to more than one-half millions of dollars, only \$10,064.18 are credited to "church collections." When you remember that this amount embraces all special collections for this cause from the churches of all the co-operating Protestant denominations in the country, and very few Baptists co-operate, because, like Mr. Garrett, they "cannot work with the American Bible Society, because their conscientious convictions will not allow it," one is left to wonder from what peculiar source "the several thousand dollars" contributed by the Baptists to this Society, emanate. But perhaps some one may imagine that the receipts from "church collections" in the year 1882 were exceptionally small. There is no evidence that such is the fact. The returns then from this source were similar to those of other years. In 1886 "church collections" are credited with \$11,643.42 and in 1887 with \$12,573.18. Whence then come these "several thousands of dollars every year" from Baptist sources? The books of the Society know nothing of them.

It was remarked in my former article that "the two Baptist Bible Societies have ceased to exist," and to this statement Mr. Garrett seriously objects, but it is unquestionably true. They have been disorganized and their plates and presses sold to the American Baptist Publication Society. Now the American Baptist Publication Society bears the same relation to the Baptist Church that the "Presbyterian Committee of Publication" does to the Presbyterian Church, or the "Methodist Book Concern" does to the Methodist Church; and it would be in as good taste and as just for me to parade before the public the strictly denominational work done last year in this community by the Presbyterians, or the Methodists, and compare it with the general undenominational work done by the American Bible Society, as it was for Mr. Garrett to compare the work which he says was done here by the Baptist Publication Society with that done by this grand unsectarian institution. I do not remember the value of the Bibles donated last year in Mason County by the American Bible Society, but I know this, that the Executive Committee is instructed to keep the public institutions, as the Jail, Almshouse, and County Poor-house, supplied with Bibles, at the expense of the Society, and every one who knows anything about it, is aware of the fact, that where either individuals or families are destitute, and at the same time either unable or unwilling to purchase the scriptures, the Society furnishes them "without money and without price." The death of the two Baptist Societies can not be denied because an effort was made to cover up their inglorious demise in the American Baptist Publication Society. They are undoubtedly dead, and their death seems to be a providential

rebuke to an ill-advised effort to make a denominational Bible. Like Saul and Jonathan:

"They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

They were originated and controlled by Baptists, they lived and labored to make Bibles for the Baptists, and when they died, they went to—the Baptist Publication Society. Peace to their ashes! I should not object to preaching their funeral and my text would certainly be, "Buried by baptism into death."

It must be said, though I say it reluctantly, that the Baptist Church has occupied a painful position in relation to the American Bible Society for the last fifty years—a position, too, which it has labored in vain to justify in the opinion of the protestant Christian world. Here in this country where the people are acquainted with the fact of the difference of views which prevails in the Christian world in regard to the ordinance of baptism they do not dare in their public services to resort to any other version than that in common use among Protestants, but when they go abroad into heathen countries, they do not hesitate to present to the poor heathen people there, who know no better translations of the Holy Scriptures which teach only one side of a hotly disputed question. I have most profound respect for the general consensus of opinion in the church of God, and I do not believe that the day will ever come when such a course of conduct will receive the approval of Christendom.

Mr. Garrett says that he can not take up a collection for the American Bible Society, and yet it is supported by the other Protestant denominations, and the Bible which it publishes is in common use, and he preaches from it every Sabbath day. Why does he not adopt a denominational Bible in all of his services? That would be a more consistent course. It seems to me that if I could consent to help publish only a denominational Bible, I could also only consent to use such an one in all my services.

Let me remind the reader that this is not a personal contest between Mr. Garrett and myself, but it is a controversy of long standing between the Baptist Church and the American Bible Society. I heartily reciprocate the warm feelings of friendship which Mr. Garrett has expressed toward me, and I sincerely hope that neither this correspondence, nor anything else, will ever disturb the pleasant relations now existing between us. It is only under force of the conviction that it was necessary, and in compliance with the judgment of others who are entitled to consideration, that I have consented to write this article. But this, however, I may say in conclusion, that I regard it as no small honor and privilege to champion such a noble, generous, and venerable institution as the American Bible Society. Respectfully yours,

RUSSELL ORCUL.
Maysville, Dec. 26th, 1887.

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